

Iran Embassy Escapee Says 8 Fled With Him But 4 Were Captured

By **MATTHEW L. WALD**

Special to The New York Times

PORT CHARLOTTE, Fla., Feb. 12 — Nine American employees of the United States Embassy in Teheran slipped out of the compound as it was taken over last Nov. 4, but four were captured by the Iranian militants, apparently because they chose the wrong route out of the area, according to Robert G. Anders, a 54-year-old consular official at the embassy.

Mr. Anders, one of the six Americans harbored in Teheran by the Canadians until their return to the United States on Jan. 30, told of the incident in a two-hour interview at the home of his in-laws here. He gave a dramatic account, the first detailed description of the escape.

3 Others Also Captured

He said that he and Lieut. Comdr. Richard Morefield, chief of the consular section, were the last two Americans to leave the consular building at the rear of the compound when Moslem militants seized the embassy.

"Fortunately for me, I happened to go in one direction with the four people I ended up with," Mr. Anders said, referring to Kathleen F. and Joseph D. Stafford and Cora A. and Mark J. Lijek, all of whom worked in the consular section and all of whom found shelter with the Canadians until they returned to the United States. But Commander Morefield "went

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The New York Times

Published: February 13, 1980

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the other way, toward the street" in front of the embassy, Mr. Anders added.

Through letters home and films of the hostages made at Christmas, Mr. Anders said, it was evident that Commander Morefield and the three other embassy employees who left with him had been captured.

Kim King, an American tourist who also fled the consular building with Mr. Anders, left Iran without incident shortly after. Henry Lee Schatz, an agricultural attaché who was the sixth American in Mr. Anders's group, was not captured because he was visiting another embassy when the militants stormed the United States Embassy.

Most of the 50 Americans still being held hostage in Teheran were captured in the Chancellery Building, the main office building in the embassy compound.

Mr. Anders, wearing sandals and an open-neck shirt and smoking a cigarette, was still reticent about some details of his experience in Teheran, including his departure from Iran.

But he recalled that that "60 or 70" people were in the consulate building when the militants began scaling the walls of the compound about 10 A.M., and said the Americans hoped to wait out the attack until the arrival of the police or Iranian Army troops.

Slipped Out the Back Door

As the day wore on, however, and after the militants had cut electricity to the compound by taking over its power plant, Mr. Anders said the decision was made to slip out a back door. Most of those in the consulate were Iranians employed by the embassy or Iranians seeking visas to enter the United States, and they left with the Americans in small groups.

For the Americans, Mr. Anders said, "the plan was to go to another embassy," which he did not identify, "We got within a block or so of the place and could see a small crowd of demonstrators," he said,

and decided that "it would not be a good idea to pursue that line."

The five Americans then walked to Mr. Anders's apartment, which they reached about midafternoon, Mr. Anders said, and began making phone calls to friends to learn the fate of the embassy. With these friends, whom he said he would not identify, they also discussed potential hideouts. Some friends called them, he added, until the phone went dead, a frequent event in Teheran and one that Mr. Anders said was "probably accidental."

They then tried a radio that Mr. Anders, like all members of the embassy staff, had in his home, but it was of limited use because the militants had seized the channel's broadcast stations and monitors at the embassy and were apparently using the frequency themselves.

Unsure what to do, the five had dinner at Mr. Anders's apartment. The two couples, he said, then went to the Iran-America Society, where they stayed until "4 or 5 in the morning," and then went to their own apartments.

'Coming to Pick You Up'

The next afternoon, with Mr. Anders's phone still dead, one of the four called him over the radio frequency now shared with the militants. "We used first names," Mr. Anders said, adding: "The conversation was something like this: 'Bob?' 'Yeah?' 'We're coming to pick you up.' 'O.K.'"

With the help of non-Americans who had two cars, the four then picked up Mr. Anders, who had had time to pack an attaché case with some personal effects.

In the next five days, the five Americans were in three or four different places, he said, adding that all the sanctuaries were residences, including two belonging to Americans who were being held hostage. Access was gained through house servants.

During this time, Mr. Anders said, he called an officer of the Canadian Embassy and told him, "I just want to let you know I'm out; I'm not a hostage."

"To show you the reaction of the Cana-

dians," Mr. Anders continued, "he answered, 'Why did you wait so long to call me? Come on over.'"

The five stayed where they were at the time, a place Mr. Anders said he would not disclose but did say that it "was not all that secure."

He then called his Canadian friend back and said, "O.K., I'd like to take you up on your offer," and introduced the two couples to the Canadian. On Nov. 10 the Canadians hid the Staffords in one place and Mr. Anders and the Lijeks in another, an 18-room house built into the side of a hill. Mr. Schatz joined them there a week later, Mr. Anders said.

"In the six days before we got to the Canadians it was a little hairy," Mr. Anders recalled. "After that it was comfortable."

Given casual clothes by their hosts, the two groups spent their time reading and playing games, and were occasionally driven a few blocks away to visit the Staffords at their hiding place. At Mr. Anders's hiding place, he said, an Iranian gardener would visit "two or three times a week," and the four would "make sure our presence was not known." They also "went off to our part of the house" during occasional visits by non-Canadian guests.

Expressing his gratitude to the Canadians, Mr. Anders said of his hosts: "They were sticking their necks out more than we were. They would be in more trouble for harboring us."

Mr. Anders would not describe the way he and the five other Americans left Iran. But, when asked if he was nervous during the exit, he replied: "Not really. It was such a well-organized thing."

He said, however, that the four in his hiding place were not aware at the time they left of an anonymous telephone call made to the Staffords at their hiding place that set the escape plan in motion. The caller told the Staffords that word of their whereabouts had spread and that their position was precarious.

The departure, which Mr. Anders said would have happened in a few weeks anyway, followed shortly afterward.

The New York Times

Published: February 13, 1980
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